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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th
ELECTION, TRANSPARENCY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: The major themes in today's editorials included the recent terrorist attacks in Ramadi and Karbala, economic crises, government formation, and the recent agreement between the PUK and KDP.

In its front-page editorial entitled "The Announcement of Unity Is a Great Event," KDP-affiliated At-Taakhi lauds the agreement between the KDP and PUK, which unites the two Kurdish administrations in the Kurdistan region. Independent As-Sabah Al-Jadeed published a front-page editorial by editor-in-chief Ismael Zayyer highlighting current political negotiations, recent terrorist attacks, and the preparations for forming the new government.

Other independent papers focused on the country's political and economic obstacles, with Az-Zaman's back page column discussing the political process since the downfall of the former regime, and Al-Mashriq's front-page editorial discussing the current fuel crisis. The author considers the observation that Iraq's situation deteriorates following each political achievement. Independent Al-Mada also assumes a somber tone in its third-page column entitled "Successive Crises and Tyrannical Decisions," by Tarek Al-Jiburi, who bemoans the relative dearth of fuel, electricity, employment and potable water in Iraq. The author suggests that the Iraqi government has intentionally harmed Iraqi citizens by remaining silent since April 9th, 2003. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A.](#) "Playing with Blood"
(Dar As-Salam, affiliated with the Iraqi Islamic Party, published a front-page unattributed editorial about the recent terrorist attacks in Karbala and Ramadi. The editorial reads in part)

"We were surprised to hear some groups accuse specific political parties of being behind the criminal events that took place in Karbala and Ramadi. These accusations widen the divisions among Iraqis and make it difficult to know who benefited from those crimes. At the same time, there are demands that the government's security forces intensify their operations without restriction. It seems that the accusations are attempts to win political benefit at the expense of innocent blood. Iraqis have the right to know why these accusations were associated with the current political crisis that began after the election fraud was revealed. This is merely playing with fire and blood, and it resembles an adventure more than a political process."

[1B.](#) "The People Know"
(Al-Adala, affiliated with SCIRI, published a third-page editorial by Ali Khalif about Iraq's political scene. The editorial reads in part)

"We are not surprised to see some groups release statements that provoke terror. We noticed that some political figures are two-faced, but the Iraqi people discovered these types of politicians before the election. For this reason the overwhelming majority of Iraqis voted for their real representatives. The political scene after the election shows that there are groups in Iraq that do not believe in democracy or ballot boxes. In any case, the determination of Iraqis will be stronger than any other tyrant because our people know what they want and they expressed this wish during the great Election Day."

[1C.](#) "Cost"
(As-Sabah, Iraqi Media Network, government financed, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Muhammad Abdul Jabbar about Iraq's economic situation. The editorial reads in part)

"The needs of the people cannot be satisfied by donations. In Iraq, there are three kinds of citizens: government employees, private sector employees, and the unemployed. Salaries of government employees must be based on the real cost of living in the country. On the other hand, the unemployed have no solution for their problem. Recently, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs began presenting financial donations to the unemployed. But these donations cannot cover the costs of the basic standards of living. If we want to find solutions to the salary problems of government employees and to the problem of the unemployed, we first have to calculate the real costs of a good life."

1D. "For the Sake of Ending Terrorism"
(Al-Ittihad, affiliated with the PUK, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Faryad Rawanduzi about the recent terrorist attacks in Iraq. The editorial reads in part)

"Terrorists have increased their crimes against the Iraqi people. This time they attacked funerals, shrines, and mosques. These terrorist operations come after the terrorists realized that the political process in Iraq is progressing. These operations represent a proclaimed battle against the Iraqi people and their dreams to establish a democratic, federal country. Hence, the political participation of all Iraqi sects and groups can bring an end to terrorism in Iraq. Terrorism has become a principal obstacle facing the progress of this country. For this reason, we have to save Iraq, the region, and the entire world from the evils of terrorism and terrorists."

KHALILZAD